You learned that most tables should have a `PRIMARY KEY` and that often, an auto-incrementing ID will be used as a primary key. But you also learned that this is **not a must-do** - you **can use any column as a primary key**!

But when should you use which column? When should you use a user's email as a primary key, instead of an "artificially added" id column?

There are couple of thoughts I want to share about this important question:

- You **can always use an auto-incrementing id column** if you want to or if you didn't find a better "real identification criteria" for a given table and its records
- You could consider using another column (e.g. an email) if that is the "**real identification criteria**" of the table's records *(for example, you could argue that users are indeed uniquely identified via their email addresses - hence you could use the email column as a `PRIMARY KEY` column)*
- You might **still want to add and use an "artificial primary key"** (a so-called surrogate key) for various reasons:
    - Maybe despite being identified uniquely via email addresses, you want to also have unique IDs for users (e.g. so that you have a simpler and shorter unique value per user)
    - Some potential "real keys" **might take up lots of memory** and could therefore even **slow down queries** => Auto-incrementing ids might be more efficient to use for frequent queries (especially when also working with lots of complex relationships)
    - Some columns **might look unique at first** - but aren't if you think about them again *(e.g. the "street" of an address might be unique - but only per city; the same street could be part of multiple cities or even countries)*

Ultimately, it will always come down to a variety of factors: The exact use-case you have, experience, personal preferences etc. You should be open to look for "real keys" instead of always automatically using auto-incrementing IDs but you probably also shouldn't force it.